


By [editorial board](#) • December 18, 2020 

 Share

 Tweet

Linfield would be ideal host for a new city rec complex

When Linfield University's founding fathers needed land to establish a local campus in the 1850s, McMinnville's founding father, William T. Newby, donated wooded acreage out south of town.

When the school needed help raising money for its original Northup Library in the 1930s, the city lent its bonding authority. When the city needed land for Sue Buel Elementary in 2004, Linfield made 11 acres available.

Given that, perhaps it should come as no surprise to learn Linfield will consider hosting a new city recreational complex on a portion of the 70 acres it inherited from Hewlett Packard, after the electronics firm ceased local operations in 1996. No surprise, but perhaps a deep feeling of hope and gratitude.

The city is facing the need to replace its 1911 library, 1924 community center, 1954 aquatic center and 1988 fire station, all of which may be past the point where restoration makes fiscal sense. It is hoping to combine the two recreational facilities in a single complex, and is open to addressing library and/or fire station needs in the bargain, if that were to prove feasible.

The Linfield site lies between Albertson's and Lowe's on Highway 99W, making it highly accessible, and facilities there could meet college as well as community needs. In addition to a community center and aquatic center, the site could eventually come to host a performing arts venue and other community spaces, according to city and college officials.

One of the first responses posted online was, "Not another bond to raise my property taxes, please!"

Well, yes. There's that.

Meeting any one of the city's four major construction needs would, no doubt, require millions of dollars. And those millions are not lying around in city coffers in wait of a particularly rainy day. Taxpayers wouldn't stand for that.

However, it took sums equally impressive for the times to erect, restore, expand and maintain the current facilities, all of which are virtually essential for a city McMinnville's size.

The city began by hiring a consulting firm, commissioning a survey and establishing an advisory committee representative of a broad range of community interests. Along the way, it displayed the foresight to approach Linfield about the former Hewlett Packard acreage.

We remain in the very early stages here. It will take lots of time, talk, study and evaluation to develop a working plan, negotiate a deal with Linfield or identify a suitable site elsewhere, and organize the kind of campaign it takes to secure the necessary bond funding.

But a partnership with the college is certainly appealing. As Linfield President Miles Davis said in giving the idea his initial blessing, "Being in education is a unique position, and it is a trust for a town. Every once in a while, you get an opportunity to blue sky something."

We once opined in this space, "Linfield provides a cultural center for McMinnville and Yamhill County, with art, music, theater and library offerings to enrich the public as well as its students."

That rings as true today as it did at the time. Here, as much as anyplace anywhere, town and gown are inextricably intertwined — and to mutual benefit.

It would be a thing of wonder to notch yet another major milestone in the relationship.